

Regional Command Southwest

Round-up

Weekly PAO Report

----- May 28, 2012 -----



NEWS

Dog Company Marines bite down on insurgency with Afghan forces during Operation Sangin United Horizons

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia



COMBAT OUTPOST TABAC, Afghanistan – During a time in which Marines are continually withdrawing from Afghanistan, Marines and Afghan National Security Forces put continued pressure on the insurgency during Operation Sangin United Horizons, a battalion-sized operation that took place, May 17-20. Dog Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, was responsible for finding and destroying weapons caches, improvised explosive devices and drug-producing facilities. The Marines focused on two key population centers, Western Wushtan and Zard Ragay, which serve as passageways through the mountains between Sangin and Kandahar. Marines from Dog Company, 1st Bn., 7th Marines,

partnered with Afghan National Army soldiers and were inserted by helicopter in the dead of night. By the time the blistering Afghan sun had risen, Marines had started their mission. Within hours they had established a patrol base as a hub for continued partnered operations. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Khan Neshin governor reaches out to district elders

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Anthony Ward Jr

KHAN NESHIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan – More than 60 people gathered at the Khan Neshin district center for an elder's shura, May 13. Shah Mahmood, the recently appointed governor of Khan Neshin, hosted the district chief of police Juma Khan, U.S. Marine commanders of 1st and 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalions, Lt. Col. George Schreffler and Lt. Col. Mark Clingan and more than 40 district elders, each representing various villages and tribes throughout Khan Neshin. Once greetings were out the way, often a lengthy affair in Afghan culture, the business commenced. "The elder's shura is the main way to bring issues of the local villages to light," said Shah Mahmood. "The elders come to the shura and discuss them with me." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Combat: Behind the scenes

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan — The Marines and sailors with Regimental Combat Team 6 and its subordinate battalions have been working nonstop on a combat operation referred to as Operation Jaws since February. The operation's goal was to disrupt the enemy and establish stronger footholds in areas where insurgents have seen few American or coalition forces. The latest phase of the operation took place in the Geston Valley where Marines and sailors with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine

Regiment cleared over 10 villages of insurgents. Maj. Jonathan O'Gorman was charged with the execution of the operation. "It was nice to get out there and be closer to the Marines; actually talk to guys on the radio and run the battle," said O'Gorman, assistant operations officer, RCT-6. "In that sense it was exciting. I wouldn't say, necessarily that (being charged with the execution) was hard, I would say there were some challenges in terms of what we were trying to do." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Blue Knights assist narcotics fight

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Isaac Lamberth

NIMROZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Crews from two MV-22B Ospreys with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 await a call to extract Marines who have been conducting a counternarcotics operation in western Nimroz province to return them to Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, May 14. Once the call arrives, the pilots and crew chiefs don their gear, prep their aircraft for takeoff and ready their weapons. Rolling down the runway at Camp Bastion, the two aircraft quickly gain speed and lift off, heading directly to the Khash Rod district in northern Nimroz province. Waiting for them are Marines from 1st Reconnaissance Battalion and members of the National Interdiction Unit, a specialized Afghan counternarcotics team. The ground units are depending on the Osprey crews to arrive in a timely manner before a dangerous situation arises. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Marines implement recycling program, save battalion thousands of dollars

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Mark Stroud



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — Lance Cpl. Matthew S. Belk, a motor vehicle mechanic with Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 4, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), came up with a plan to help his battalion save money in a combat zone through recycling. Belk's idea was to implement a system that function tests dead tactical-vehicle batteries. Under the new system, each spent battery that passes the function test is then re-charged and re-distributed throughout the battalion for use in their vehicle fleet. "This is [Belk's] brainstorm. He came up with the idea and [gathered all of the necessary equipment]," said Cpl.

Edgar E. Aguilar, non-commissioned officer in-charge, CLB-4 Hazardous Waste Accumulation Point, Support Company. "The program has saved [CLB-4] over \$120,000 so far on purchasing new batteries." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

One stop morale shop: Warfighter Exchange Services Team travels throughout Helmand Province

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. John Jackson

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – “Whenever anybody sees the PX truck, that is all you hear about – people saying ‘Oh, the PX truck is here,’” said Lance Cpl. Cody Turner, a combat engineer with 9th Engineer Support Battalion. “It’s definitely a morale booster for all the Marines at the [Forward Operating Bases].” Forward operating bases, patrol bases and combat outposts are widely spread throughout Helmand Province, Afghanistan, and many service members – like Turner, who is currently at FOB Shukvani – do not have the luxury of a Post Exchange. Without access to a permanent PX, acquiring a small “taste of home” can typically only be achieved through care packages. Luckily for the service members deployed to remote locations, the Warfighter Exchange Services Team travels throughout the area of operations to ensure the Marines and sailors are able to purchase some “morale boosters.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Marine cooks serve hot chow with pride in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. James Mercure



FORWARD OPERATING BASE WHITEHOUSE, Afghanistan – When the Marines of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment come back to base from another operation, they’re dog-tired, dirty and hungry. It’s one o’clock in the morning, but the food service Marines have a hot meal waiting for the grunts who have just endured 48 hours of combat. “You’re so tired after an (operation) it’s great coming back to a hot meal,” said Lance Cpl. William Covington from Meridian, Miss., improvised explosive device detection dog handler, Alpha Co. “Chow drives everybody, and theirs keeps us going.” The cooks at FOB Whitehouse operate

with a seven-man crew and start working at 5 a.m. to prepare breakfast for several hundred people. “Just for breakfast we go through 20 pounds of rice, 700 eggs, 330 sausage patties, 250 orange juice cartons, 250 fruit cocktail cups and, of course, 3 gallons of coffee,” said Sgt. Gabriel Wrigley from Dallas, Texas, food service specialist, Headquarters and Service Company. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Deployed servicemembers run half marathon in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Brian Buckwalter

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan – Runners half a world apart shared something in common May 20 – running the Marine Corps Historic Half marathon. Thirty-three runners participated in a shadow version of the 13.1-mile race at Forward Operating Base Delaram II, the same day the race is also held in Fredericksburg, Va. In Afghanistan, the race started at dawn so participants running against a clock could also try to outrun the desert heat. First Lt. Michael Bell, who helped organize the event, was excited to see the hard work of putting the event together come to fruition. We had our opening prayer. The sun’s coming up. “We’re in Afghanistan. It’s like, alright, this is actually happening now,” he recalled was going through his mind just before the race started. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Afghan police build swing set for boys school

Story and photos by Marine Staff Sgt. Brian Buckwalter



DELARAM DISTRICT CENTER, Afghanistan – Teachers in one Afghan school might have a harder time keeping their students under control thanks to the local police. Afghan police from Delaram District Center installed two new swings at the Delaram Boy's High School May 17, to the delight of many of the younger students. About 800 boys in grades five through 11 attend daily. The police also brought donated supplies for the school including shoes, books and sports equipment. The school principal, who requested not to be named, said he was happy the police came and put the swings up, but was most pleased with the books and other school supplies. He said education is the most important

thing for the young Afghans. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

HEROES

Marine, leader, friend remembered during memorial

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Kenneth Jasik

FORWARD OPERATING BASE EDINBUROUGH, Afghanistan – Marines gathered to remember and celebrate the life of a squad leader with Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, May 18. Sergeant Wade D. Wilson died while conducting combat operations in Musa Qa'leh District, May 11, when an insurgent opened fire about 25 meters away from him. "He gave his life with his weapon drawn between an insurgent and another Marine," said 1st Lt. John D. Black, Wilson's platoon commander. Wilson, 22, from Centerville, Texas, is remembered as more than a leader by his Marines. His confidence and decision-making skills gave Marines around him the feeling of safety. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Corpsmen rescue wounded Marine during firefight

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Kenneth Jasik



MUSA QA'LEH DISTRICT, Afghanistan – When the Marines reached the hilltop, they knew it was going to be a rough day. They had already taken fire, and they were patrolling in an area that coalition forces had rarely been since the decade-long war began. At the top of the hill, the Marines took fire from insurgents when one of their brothers was wounded. Petty Officer 3rd Class Eduardo D. Estrada, corpsman, Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, along with two other corpsmen, helped save the life of 1st Lt. Michael Rhoads, a forward observer, who was shot in the torso, April 15. The Marine was wounded during Operation Lariat, a mission to cut off insurgent supply routes. The Marines were going to investigate suspicious compounds, but started taking fire when they got near the village. "Right before they called 'corpsman up,' the

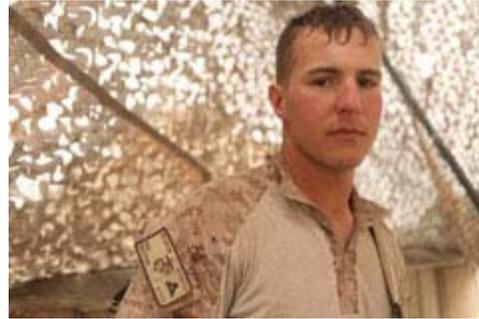
insurgents started walking shots on us, and they started impacting about three feet from us," said Estrada, 24, from Tucson, Ariz. "At the time, I was thinking 'I really want to get out of here.'" [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

VIGNETTES

New York Marine heads back to southern Helmand for second tour

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Anthony Ward Jr

KHAN NESHIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan – Brandon Barton never thought he would find himself wearing a Marine Corps uniform. After a bit of time spent working odd jobs, life in the U.S. military began to seem like a more realistic possibility. “I graduated from Gowanda Senior High School,” said the lance corporal from Gowanda, N.Y. Soon after walking across the stage to receive his diploma, the future light armored vehicle crewman found himself working several jobs to make ends meet. “I worked as a conveyor belt technician with a company out of Buffalo,” said Barton. “I worked at the Gowanda Moose with my mother and a local pizzeria.” During his time as a member of the working class, he put one of his adolescent dreams on the back burner. **(Read the STORY)**



Indiana Marine builds bonds with Afghans

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot



WUSHTAN, Afghanistan - During a halt in a security patrol here May 18, Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Barth, a native on New Albany, Ind., sat down next to Muhammed Hasim, one of his counterparts with the Afghan National Army, and struck up a conversation. Though Barth is not fluent in the Dari language, he knew enough to be able to make jokes with Hasim. Soon, the Marine and soldier were laughing together, and a crowd of Afghan children gathered to see what was going on. Hasim and the other Afghan soldiers handed out food and candy to the children while others soldiers and Marines spoke with adults of the village. Barth is a team leader serving with Animal Company, 1st Battalion, 7th

Marine Regiment. He acts as an advisor and liaison to Afghan forces serving alongside Marines. **(Read the STORY)**

California Marine builds critical infrastructure in southern Helmand

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Anthony Ward Jr

KHAN NESHIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan – As Afghan National Security Forces continue to take the lead in providing security across southern Helmand province, coalition forces are able to focus more attention on developing critical infrastructure. Lance Cpl. Gelson Orantes, a member of Civil Affairs Team 4, Kilo Detachment, Regimental Combat Team 5, is just one of the U.S. Marines improving infrastructure for the people of Khan Neshin district. “I’ve been in Afghanistan about a month and a half now,” said Orantes, a native of Lawndale, Calif. “I’m still getting used to being away from all my family, friends, the weather... since I’m a reservist, I’m now a full-time Marine so I have to get used to that too.”

(Read the STORY)



Combat engineer gains experience, rank while deployed

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. John Jackson



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – April 28, 2012, started out like any other day for Petty Officer 1st Class Benny Flores, but by late afternoon it took a turn for the worse. Flores, a corpsman for Regional Command (Southwest), was providing medical coverage for a three-day, Afghan-led mission to Zaranj near the Iranian border. This was a routine mission and many have taken the trip. Corpsmen go as medical support in case of incidences, but an interpreter was not necessary. Zaranj is the capital of Nimruz province and is considered the most progressive city in Afghanistan. There is a major highway that starts in Delaram and ends in India.

Women walk the streets, crowded with vendors, unescorted without burkas. At times, the highway is congested with trucks and other vehicles going to and from the border. The city also has a major hospital and Iranians often cross the border for medical treatment. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Born in the United States, raised in Mexico, one man advises Afghans

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia

COMBAT OUTPOST TABAC, Afghanistan – Growing up in Mexico, Sgt. Noel Rodriguez knew he wanted to experience the world and the various cultures in it. Rodriguez, a guide with Animal Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, from Denver, was born in California. When he was one his mother moved him down to Mexico where he spent the majority of his youth growing up. Once he was 14 years old Rodriguez moved again, this time to Colorado where a few of his brothers lived at the time. Spanish became his first language and English his second. His ability to learn multiple languages has helped him learn a little bit of Farsi, making it easier to communicate with Afghan National Army soldiers who he is charged to advise. “Just in general, he’s a very personable and likeable guy to begin with,” said 2nd Lt. Andrew Darlington, the officer in charge for Advisor Team 4, Animal Company, 1st Bn., 7th Marines, from New Orleans. “He’s a natural fit for the advisor mission because he has the ability to pick up languages very quickly and appreciate different cultures.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



From the couch to combat

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot



Sgt. Enrique Zamora, a crew chief with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 and Los Fresnos, Texas, native, keeps an unusual collection with him on flights: a selection of Chevrolet Hot Wheels cars. “For good luck,” Zamora explained before his CH-53E Super Stallion took off to conduct drug raids in southwestern Afghanistan May 17. His brother-in-law collects the tiny cars and Zamora said that, while Chevrolets are his favorites, they all remind him of home. On his third deployment, flying with Marines and Afghan National Army military police personnel to stop drug trafficking in the volatile region is just another day at the

office for Zamora. The 31-year-old father of three, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2004 after seeing service members on the news doing good things, he explained. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Milwaukee Marine keeps spirits high on deployment

Story and photos by Marine Lance Cpl. Tyler Reiriz

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan- The first interaction of a person's morning can often set the tone for how the rest of their day will turn out. That's why Staff Sgt. Anthony B. Triplett, staff secretary administration chief with 1st Marine Division (Forward), makes sure to start every day with a smile on his face. Triplett, 29, a native of Milwaukee, began his Marine Corps Career in 2003. His recruiter told him the Marine Corps had the most difficult basic training. Triplett, a lifelong athlete, couldn't turn down the challenge. The Marine Corps has taken him to South Carolina, California, North Carolina and Minneapolis. No matter where he ends up, Triplett said he makes sure to bring his positive attitude with him.

Sergeant Joey Cruz, assistant security manager serving with the division and native of Long Island, New York, said when he first met Triplett as a Lance Cpl. at the School of Infantry West in 2004, he already had his signature upbeat attitude. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



New York Detective puts skills to use in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Tyler Reiriz



WUSHTAN, Afghanistan - Marc Davis took a few minutes to talk to an old Afghan man on the road, May 19. As a veteran of the New York City police force, it is a scenario he has been through hundreds of times. The only difference is that instead taking place on a busy city street surrounded by towering skyscrapers, it's happening on a dirt road next to a mosque surrounded by small mud buildings in Washtun, Afghanistan. Davis, 47, recently retired from a long career as a detective investigating robberies and homicides in New York City. He now uses the skills he honed as a detective in his new job as a law-enforcement professional working with the Marine Corps. "What we do is bring some of the criminal

justice applications from the American city streets to work in Afghanistan," he said. "The Marines right now are basically doing detective work, but they are here in a combat zone. We are trying to bridge that gap."

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Marines earn citizenship, fight for country

Video by Marine Cpl. Isaac Lamberth

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Two Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 273 reached a turning point in their lives when they swore in and became American citizens prior to deploying to Afghanistan. Staff Sgt. Jason Constable, a watch officer and combat engineer, and Sgt. Jose Guadarramapedraza, an administration specialist, are now citizens of the United States. "I've always felt like I was an American," said Constable, a native of New Zealand. Constable said he came to the United States in 1985 and completed his sophomore year in high school after having stayed in the country four years. He returned in 1991 and became a security guard at a local hospital in Phoenix, before joining the Marine Corps in 1993. "My father wanted me to join the French Foreign Legion," he said.

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)



'Vengeance' takes flight, lifts off for first deployment

Video by Marine Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - It was after midnight, yet there was an undeniable energy in the air as the Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 469 personnel gathered outside their squadron offices aboard Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, for their transfer of authority ceremony May 15. HMLA-469 "Vengeance" smoothly and quietly assumed command of light attack helicopter squadron duties from the HMLA-369 "Gunfighters" in the middle of the night, with only a few minutes of ceremony before beginning combat operations for the first time in their history. The following morning, Lance Cpl. Dean Ray, a Vengeance crew chief and Stockton, Calif., native, emanated the same nervous

excitement echoing around the squadron. Like Vengeance, he is on his first deployment. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

VIDEOS

Behind the Scenes of Operation Jaws

Video by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo

The execution of a combat operation can be a very stressful and hard job for those who are tasked with it. Marine Maj. Jonathan O'Gorman explains a little about the process he went through when he was charged with executing the latest phase of Operation Jaws. Sound bite includes Major Jonathan O'Gorman - Assistant Operations Officer. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Marines Clear Afghan Villages of Insurgents

Video by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo



Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment clear Afghan Villages of Insurgents. Soundbites from Capt. Ryan Gordnier, Staff Sgt. Michael Rowland, Lance Cpl. Frank Young. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Cooking During Combat

Video by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo

Eating the same thing over and over can bore anyone. The Marines of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment have found a simple way of breaking the routine. Produced by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo. Includes soundbites from Lance Cpl. Xavier Lopez, team leader, C Co., 1-8 Marine Regiment. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Delaram II Hosts Satellite Marine Corps Historic Half Marathon

Video by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo



Service members and contractors currently deployed to Forward Operating Base Delaram II, Afghanistan enjoyed a nice jog together around the base. Cpl. Ed Galo reports. Soundbites from Lt. Rebecca Murphy, Capt. Patrick Sullivan, Petty Officer 2nd Class Antonio Saenz and 1st Lt. Michael Bell. ([Watch the VIDEO](#))

Marketed/Republished Combat Correspondent Product

Sgt. Christopher Francis Germantown TN News reporter

Marine, leader, friend remembered during memorial by Cpl. Jasik republished in the Dallas Morning News

New York Marine heads back to southern Helmand for second tour by Cpl. Ward republished on the Face of Defense

An Afghan Shoots, A Marine Dies, Mistrust Grows - NPR Article/audio story by Tom Bowman broadcast on All Things Considered

Military Addresses Double-Edged Sword Of Troops On Social Media - NPR Article/audio story by Tom Bowman broadcast on All Things Considered

A Marine's Perspective on Progress in Helmand Province Story by Cpl. Reece Lodder

Marine unit rotations in Afghanistan underscore ongoing drawdown - Military Times Based on story by Cpl. Reece Lodder

Former Taliban Stronghold Faces The Post-U.S. Future - NPR Article/audio story by Tom Bowman broadcast on All Things Considered

Sgt. Waylon Sliker, talks with a New Jersey Herald reporter

Cpl. Ed Galo, talks to a WTKF-FM reporter in Jacksonville, N.C.

2nd Lt. Joshua Fernandez, talks to a WTKF-FM reporter in Jacksonville, N.C.

Afghan Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians Test New Skillsplaced on KSWB-TV and San Diego, CA.

Navy Lt. Daniel Chung talks about why he joined the military as a chaplain with the Yuma Sun

Lt. Michael Beasley on Radio Lia
